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The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

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Letter dated 10 August 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing in response to the letter dated 27 July 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations regarding the massive fires in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan (A/60/961-S/2006/588).

It is noteworthy that the Permanent Representative of Armenia distributed, as an official document of the United Nations, the Report on fires, which had been released by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office to the parties as a confidential document. Moreover, he arbitrarily annexed the Report with the list of attachments that are not related to it.

As to the misstatement of "groundless accusations" against his country, it suffices to recall that the OSCE Fact-Finding Mission, dispatched in 2005 to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, confirmed the facts of the Armenian settlement of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The following Minsk Group Chairmanship's recommendations — "**The Co-Chairs discourage any further settlements in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The Co-Chairs urge the parties to accelerate negotiations toward a political settlement in order, inter alia, to address the problem of settlers and to avoid changes in the demographic structure of the region, which would make more difficult any future efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement**" — speak for themselves (A/59/747-S/2005/187, annex I).

As for the allegations that Azerbaijan tries "to create an 'emergency situation' out of a usual natural phenomenon of grass fires occurring yearly in the region in the hottest period of the summer", I invite the Armenian Ambassador to merely glance at the satellite images of the fire-affected occupied territories of Azerbaijan (A/60/911-S/2006/450).

Furthermore, the comparison of satellite images of 2005 and 2006 has proven clearly that in 2005 these territories were not touched by fire. Satellite images confirm that the scope, character and way of spreading of fires have been of intentional and artificial origin. The fact that the fires have affected exclusively the

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occupied territories all along the front-line is yet another proof to that conclusion. Due to the absence of experts in the OSCE Mission as acknowledged by the Report itself, "it was not possible to present a broader assessment."

In paragraph 4 of the letter, the Permanent Representative of Armenia, out of his will and desire, confirms the fact of occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan despite his initial intention to state different.

As far as the so-called "duly elected authorities" are concerned, let me remind the rejection of the so-called "parliamentary elections" held on 19 June 2005 by the international community, in particular, Russia and France, Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group, which stated that they support the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, and did not recognize Nagorny Karabakh as an independent state (A/59/862-S/2005/426).

Another point in the above-mentioned letter — "intensive negotiations between the parties to the conflict" — should be dismissed. It is well-known that no negotiations are being conducted at the present stage and the issue of "the self-determination" has not been a subject of negotiations.

Disapproving cynical attempt to present the massive fires in the occupied territories as "a usual natural phenomenon of grass fires", Azerbaijan reiterates that severe damage has been inflicted to the environment of these territories, having seriously undermined its fragile ecosystem, including soil, flora and fauna. In its conclusion the Report on fires states itself that "**there is a lack of proper fire-fighting equipment on both sides and in some places the sources of water were not sufficiently close. International assistance for this would be helpful.**"

No comments.

Apparently, urgent measures are needed to suppress the fires, to overcome their detrimental consequences and rehabilitate the fire-affected territories. Azerbaijan considers it as a matter of the most urgent priority and calls upon the international community to conduct an environmental operation through the participation of the relevant international organizations and the parties themselves. This kind of operation and mutual interaction could establish CBMs between the parties.

I should be grateful if the present letter were urgently distributed as a document of the General Assembly under item 40 of the agenda of its sixtieth session and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yashar **Aliyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative